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FOR: TOBACCO INDUSTRY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

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NEW EVIDENCE SHOWS COMPLEXITIES OF LUNG CANCER, SCIENTIST SAYS

Nashville, Tenn. -- Charges that smoking causes lung cancer "have not been proved in the scientific laboratory," even though they "have been put to the test through intensive research," Dr. Clarence Cook Little said today.

Dr. Little has been a cancer researcher for 53 years and is now scientific director of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee, a group dedicated to support of independent scientific research into tobacco and health questions.

"There are literally hundreds of studies indicating that many factors are involved in the complex chain that may result in lung cancer," Dr. Little said at the annual meeting of the Burley & Dark Leaf Tobacco Export Association.

He observed that "No one really knows what part, if any, smoking plays in causing lung cancer. But new evidence tends to throw doubt on, rather than support, the charges against smoking as a major causative factor in this disease."

Dr. Little listed six other important facts derived from recent research into smoking and health:

1. "While the reported number of lung cancer cases has been rising, the total death rate in the U.S. from major respiratory diseases -- including lung cancer -- has dropped to one-seventh what it was in 1900." He attributed much of the rise in reported lung cancer to a larger population, especially more older people; "medical advances that have enabled people cured of other lung ailments to live to the age when they are more prone to lung cancer;" better methods for diagnosing the disease; and more accurate reporting of death causes.

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Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/ypcm0000

2. "The vast majority of smokers never get lung cancer," while many non-smokers do get it. This suggests many factors are involved, he said. Among those being studied are: air pollution, viruses, hormones, infective lung damage, poor nutrition, exposure to occupational hazards and fumes from motor fuels.

3. Chemical tests have not found any substance in tobacco smoke known to cause human cancer or in concentrations sufficient to account for reported skin cancer in animals.

4. Attempts to produce lung cancer in animals by having them inhale tobacco smoke "have consistently failed to produce cancer." Dr. Little said "Tests of this kind are evidence toward the conclusion that tobacco smoke does not have any direct cancer-causing effect on animals or people."

5. Recent research suggests that "a person's use or non-use of tobacco may depend on the type of person he is." One study showed that smokers generally are more "active and outgoing" than non-smokers. "This research also suggests that some people may be more susceptible to such diseases as cancer, heart disease and ulcers because of their physiological and psychological makeup," Dr. Little explained.

6. "There is no evidence that smoking causes heart disease. While we know that smoking and nicotine may have some physiological effects -- such as giving a slight 'lift' -- science is finding that some of these effects may indeed be beneficial."

Dr. Little said "cancer and heart disease are...a series of related diseases of extreme complexities. They involve many complex mechanisms and have their origin within the person.

"For the sake of scientific progress and the support of sound and basic scientific research, we must be extremely skeptical of claims for simple solutions to these diseases until our knowledge is certain. At present, it is not."

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The Tobacco Industry Research Committee does no research itself. It makes grants-in-aid to independent scientists. Dr. Little said the Committee has thus far made available $4 million and has made grants to more than 100 scientists.

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